

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COTONO 00295 090706Z

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9365
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0295

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PROP SOPN PFOR DM NK CU US

SUBJ: BENIN COUP ATTEMPT AFTERMATH: PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN

REF: A COTONOU 276 (NOTAL), COTONOU 168 C COTONOU 233

SUMMARY: GPRB PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN CONTINUES, WITH NORTH KOREAN
AND CUBAN SUPPORT. EMBASSY SUSPECTS CURRENT CAMPAIGN A FILLER
BEFORE NEXT NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. THREE WEEKS AFTER JAN 16 ATTACK, WITH SECURITY PROCEDURE
SITUATION SLOWLY RETURNING TO NORMAL IN THE STREETS OF COTONOU
(REF A) THE GPRB HAS MOVED ITS PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN INTO HIGH
GEAR. EMBASSY HAS NOTED AN INTENSIFICATION IN ANTI-WESTERN
ANTI-WHITE RHETORIC, WHICH THEN IS REINFORCED BY COMMUNIST BLOC
PROPAGANDA DESIGNED FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION.

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PAGE 02 COTONO 00295 090706Z

2. ON FEBRUARY 2, PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF BENIN OBSERVED A NATIONAL
DAY OF MOURNING FOR FIVE SOLDIERS AND ONE CIVILIAN ALLEGEDLY
KILLED DURING JANUARY 16 FIGHTING. PRECEEDINGS HIGHLIGHTED
BY PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE NATION BEFORE LARGE CROWD AT
AKPAKPA SPORTS STADIUM ON OUTSKIRTS OF COTONOU. HIS VOICE
CHOKED WITH EMOTION, KEREKOU REPEATED THE THEME OF "CRIMINAL
AGGRESSION LAUNCHED BY THE FORCES OF INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM

AT BAY" AND GAVE NEW EXPRESSION TO THE THEME OF "COLONIAL RECONQUEST." KEREKOU GAVE A BRIEF OUTLINE OF BENIN'S INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO ALLIED FORCES IN WORLD WARS I AND II, WHICH HE DESCRIBED A "PAROXYSMS OF INTER-IMPERIALIST CONTRADICTIONS." HE SAID BENINESE HAD THOUGHT THEY WERE FIGHTING FOR THEIR INALIENABLE RIGHTS, WHEREAS IN THE END ONLY COLONIALISM HAD BEEN VICTORIOUS. ANSWERING HIS RHETORICAL QUESTION AS TO WHY THE "HORDE OF BLOODY EUROPEAN MERCENARIES" ATTACKED ON JANUARY 16, HE SAID "TO PERPETRATE THEIR ODIUS CRIMES IN THEIR VILE DESIGN TO RECONQUER OUR LAND AND TAKE AGAIN OUR WEALTH AND RICHES." CEREMONY ENDED WITH A FUNERAL PARADE FROM STADIUM TO CAMP GUEZO.

3. GPRB MEDIA HAS GIVEN PLAY TO A NUMBER OF RADICAL THIRD WORLD AND COMMUNIST SPOKESMEN, MOST FREQUENTLY NORTH KOREANS. NORTH KOREAN AMBASSADOR HEUNG HELD PRESS CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 4 IN WHICH HE LINKED THE JANUARY 16 ATTACK WITH THE PRESENCE OF "MERCENARIES AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN SOUTH KOREA." HEUNG ALSO DREW PARALLEL WITH AUGUST 18, 1976 DMZ INCIDENT, LABELING IT ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF "INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM PUTTING INTO EXECUTION A PLAN OF PROVOCATION."

4. NEWEST ACTORS IN THE DRAMA ARE CUBANS. AMBASSADORIAL DELEGATION FROM LAGOS ARRIVED COTONOU FEBRUARY 2 AND AGENCE PRESSE LATINE INTERVIEW OF KEREKOU WAS HELD FEBRUARY 3. INTERVIEW YIELDED NO NEW REVELATIONS, AND HEAVY EMPHASIS WAS PUT ON THE COMPLICITY OF CERTAIN "NEO-COLONIALIST" AFRICAN STATES WITH ZINZOUISTS. GPRB MEDIA HAS ALSO CALLED ATTENTION TO GOVERNMENT EFFORTS IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. GUINEAN STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 COTONO 00295 090706Z

ARE QUITE COMMON AS WELL.

5. COMMENT: MOST DISTURBING NEW ELEMENT IN PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN IS RACIST, ANTI-WHITE BIAS IN LOCAL LANGUAGE RADIO BROADCASTS WHICH HAVE GREAT IMPACT ON RURAL FARMERS AND URBAN UNDEREMPLOYED, MANY OF WHOM DO NOT SPEAK OR READ FRENCH. LACKING THE CAPACITY FOR SUCH NUANCES AS "INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM AT BAY" AND "COLONIAL RECONQUEST," THESE LOCAL LANGUAGE BROADCASTS TEND TO CAST INVASION ISSUE IN SIMPLE TERMS OF THE EVILS OF THE WHITE MAN. CONSIDERING THE HIGH DEGREE OF INTER-RACIAL HARMONY WHICH HAS EXISTED HERETOFORE, INTRODUCTION OF RACIST ELEMENT IS UNFORTUNATE DEVELOPMENT.

6. DESPITE THE DECLARATION OF A STATE OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY JANUARY 28, BENINESE POPULATION, ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY LISTENING WITH ACUTE INTEREST, DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE IN STATE OF "PERMANENT MOBILIZATION" CALLED FOR BY KEREKOU. EMBASSY SPECULATES THAT CURRENT PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN MAY BE ONLY A FILLER INTENDED TO KEEP EMOTIONS FUELED UNTIL NEXT SCENE, WHICH

PERHAPS WILL BE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INSTALLED JANUARY 31,
COMPOSED OF GUINEA, NIGERIA, AND BENIN. THOMPSON

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